

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 COLOMB 01761 201158Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02  
SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07 /065 W  
-----210125Z 100923 /14  
R 201038Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7326

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJ: PATRONAGE APPOINTMENTS DRAW CRITICISM

REF: COLOMBO 1667

1. A GROWING POLITICAL -- AND RACIAL -- CONTROVERSY SURROUNDS THE EDUCATION MINISTRY'S DECISION TO HIRE UP TO 6000 NEW TEACHERS ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF M.P.'S JUST TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE ELECTION. MINISTER BADIUDDIN MAHMUD'S INITIAL ATTEMPTS TO HIRE THE TEACHERS WERE DELAYED WHILE SLFP LEADERS CONSIDERED WHETHER THEY MIGHT BE LAYING THEMSELVES OPEN TO CHARGES OF BRIBERY OR OTHER ELECTION OFFENSES. IT WAS DECIDED THAT THOSE PROBLEMS COULD BE AVOIDED BY GIVING ALL M.P.'S -- OPPOSITION AND GOVERNMENT -- SOME SAY IN THE SELECTION. NEVERTHELESS AT LEAST ONE INDEPENDENT M.P. (FORMER PRIME MINISTER W. DAHANAYAKE) HAS ANGRILY REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE ON THE GROUNDS THAT HE HADN'T BEEN OFFERED SUCH PATRONAGE APPOINTMENTS IN THE PAST SEVEN YEARS AND THAT SUCH APPOINTMENTS NOW WERE BLATANTLY POLITICAL. OPPOSITION LEADER 'I. R. JAYEWARDENE SUGGESTED THAT HIS PARTY M.P.'S NOT REPLY TO THE MINISTER'S REQUEST FOR RECOMMENDATIONS "SINCE THE LEGALITY OF THE APPOINTMENTS IS DOUBTFUL."

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PAGE 02 COLOMB 01761 201158Z

2. MAHMUD, NEVER A POPULAR FIGURE, HAS OFTEN BEEN ACCUSED OF FAVORING HIS OWN MOSLEM COMMUNITY IN EDUCATIONAL MATTERS. MOSLEMS HAVE CLEARLY BEEN AWARDED A DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF THESE PATRONAGE APPOINTMENTS, A FACT THAT HAS BEEN INSINUATED IN MOST NEWSPAPERS AND OPENLY COMPLAINED ABOUT IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS. THE OTHER OBVIOUS BENEFICIARIES OF THE

LARGESSE ARE THE VOTERS OF BATTICALOA CONSTITUENCY, WHICH MAHMUD, IN HIS FIRST RUN FOR POLITICAL OFFICE(HE IS NOW AN APPOINTED M.P.), WILL CONTEST IN THE ELECTIONS. EVEN GOVERNMENT M.P.'S ARE SAID TO BE PROTESTING THE RACIAL IMBALANCE IN THE ASSIGNMENTS, THE BLATANT OPPORTUNISM OF THE WHOLE OPERATION, AND MAHMUD'S FAILURE TO GIVE THEM THEIR SHARE OF THE APPOINTMENTS.

3. COMMENT: LIKE THE LAND DISTRIBUTION IN THE PLANTATION AREAS (REFTEL) AND SIMILAR PATRONAGE APPOINTMENTS IN OTHER MINISTRIES, THIS SCHEME WILL BE SEIZED UPON BY THE OPPOSITION AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE POLITICAL CORRUPTION OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT AND DISMISSED BY CYNICS AS POLITICS AS USUAL. THE MOSLEM-SINHALESE OVERTONES HOWEVER DEMONSTRATE THE LATENT RACIAL TENSIONS THAT CAN BE EXACERBATED IN ELECTION CAMPAIGNS; THE LAND DISTRIBUTION, A SIMILAR EXAMPLE OF TAMIL-SINHALESE BITTERNESS, RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF A AMIL ESTATE WORKER (REFTEL) AND HAS SPARKED CONTINUING SPORADIC CLASHES IN THE ESTATE COUNTRY BETWEEN TAMIL WORKERS AND SINHALESE VILLAGERS.  
REED

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Review Markings:**  
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